

EMERGENCY LESSON PLANS

Days 1-5

Directions:

Reading: Read each of the following short stories online. Links are provided to access the full text of the story online. To follow the link, position your mouse cursor over the URL address and click Ctrl + Click.

Writing: For each story, eight questions which target character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme are provided. Answer each of the following eight questions for all stories. Be sure to use complete sentences and specific textual support for each question in order to support your thoughts and opinions. Prepare the questions by including your name, date, and grade level. Be sure to label each set of questions with the title of the story in quotation marks at the top of the page. All assignments should be typed or neatly handwritten in blue or black ink.

SHORT STORIES:

1. "Thank You, Ma'am" by Langston Hughes

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/shortstories/hughesthankyou.html>

2. "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/shortstories/vonnegutharrisonbergeron.html>

3. "I Stand Here Ironing" by Tillie Olsen

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/shortstories/olsenironing.html>

QUESTIONS:

1. Did you think the characters and their problems, decisions, and relationships were believable or realistic? If not, was the author trying to make them realistic, and why did he or she fail? Did the male/female author draw realistic male and female characters? Which character could you relate to best and why? Write about three secondary characters. Were they important to the story? Did any stand out for you? Why or why not?

EMERGENCY LESSON PLANS

2. Write about the location. Was setting important to the story? Was the author's description of the landscape/community interesting and detailed? Write about the time period of the story. In what way was time important to the story? Did the author convey the era well? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the events in the story? Why or why not for all of the above?
3. How was the short story structured? Did the author use any structural or narrative devices like flashbacks or multiple voices in telling the story? How did this affect the story and your appreciation of the short story? Do you think the author did a good job with it? Whose voice was the story told in (from whose point of view is the story told)? How do you think it might have been different if another character was telling the story?
4. Write about the author's use of language/writing style. Read your favorite couple of passages out loud. Was the language appropriate to the story? Was it more poetic or vernacular? Did it stand in the way of your appreciation of the story, or enhance your enjoyment of the short story? Was the dialogue realistic sounding? Was there a rhythm to the author's style, or anything else that might be considered unique about it?
5. Was the author fairly descriptive? Was he or she better at describing the concrete or the abstract? Was the author clear about what he or she was trying to say, or were you confused by some of what you read? How did this affect your reading of the short story?
6. Write about the plot. What was more important, the characters or the plot? Was the plot moved forward by decisions of the characters, or were the characters at the mercy of the plot? Was the action believable? What events in the story stand out for you as memorable? Was the story chronological? Was there foreshadowing and suspense or did the author give things away at the beginning of the short story? Was this effective? How did it affect your enjoyment of the short story?
7. What were two of the major themes of the short story? Are they relevant in your life? Why? Did the author effectively develop these themes? If so, how? If not, why not? Was there redemption in the short story? For any of the characters? Why are themes or universal messages important or useful for readers? Did you think the story was funny, sad, touching, disturbing, moving? Why or why not?
8. Compare this short story to others you have read. What aspects are similar among the short stories? What do you think will be your lasting impression of the short story? What will be your most vivid memories of it a year from now? Or will it just leave a vague impression, and what will that be? Or will you not think of it at all in a year's time?